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### Watching Dallas again 3

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## PEDAGOGY

# Watching *Dallas* again 3: Reassessing Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas*

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[0.1] Abstract—This audience reception project performs an audience study of the first season of the new *Dallas* (2012–14). It draws on Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas* ([1982] 1985) to analyze the production of irony and nostalgia. We observe that the blend of ironic viewing and nostalgia results in a more ironic, reflective nostalgia, in contrast to a more serious restorative type of nostalgia.

[0.2] Keywords—Nostalgia; TV studies

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## 1. Introduction

[1.1] "The one and only *Dallas* is back with more delicious drama. J.R., Bobby and Sue Ellen Ewing return to the ranch...joined by the next generation of Ewings, who take ambition and deception to a wicked new level" ([http://shop.tntdrama.com/media/index.php?v=tnt\\_shows\\_dallas\\_media](http://shop.tntdrama.com/media/index.php?v=tnt_shows_dallas_media)). An American television serial about a family living on Southfork Ranch in Texas, the 2012 version of *Dallas* picks up where the old left off, with Ewing family feuds, old rivalries, and oil intrigues. Taking its cues from the original show, which premiered in 1978 and ran for 14 seasons until its cancellation in 1991, the new *Dallas*'s main plot revolves around one part of the Ewing family trying to drill for oil on the ranch and the other part trying to stop the drilling in order to preserve the family's lands. The new *Dallas* premiered in 2012, exactly 30 years after Ien Ang's book *Het Geval Dallas* (*Watching Dallas*) was first published. *Watching Dallas* analyzed audience reactions to the television series. This project intends to do the same for the 2012 version of *Dallas*.

[1.2] In her research, Ang analyzed the reception of *Dallas* (1978–91) by gauging audience reactions to the show. She placed an advertisement in *Viva*, a Dutch women's magazine, asking readers to respond to the following question: "I like watching *Dallas*, but often get odd reactions to it. Would anyone like to write and tell me why you like watching it too, or dislike it? I would like to assimilate these reactions in my university thesis." She received over 40 letters, all of which she used in her research. We conducted our research in a similarly qualitative manner.

[1.3] Two decades have passed since the end of the original show, which situates the *Dallas* reboot (2012–14) in a brand-new television era. When Ang conducted her original research in The Netherlands, there were no commercial channels. In the early 1980s, The Netherlands had only two channels, with a third added in 1988. This is a completely different matter today: more than 25 cable channels alone are currently broadcast inside the country. Does this freedom affect our reception of television shows? We intended to examine how this changed media landscape has influenced the viewing experience.

[1.4] Thus, we analyzed viewers' reactions to the new 2012 *Dallas* series in order to find out what kind of meaning viewers give to their experiences and how that differs from 30 years ago. Although we focused on how audiences perceive the new *Dallas*, we also considered how media consumption has changed in general.

## 2. Methodology

[2.1] Following Ang's research on *Dallas*, we too relied on the use of qualitative case studies rather than quantitative methods. Forty-two people responded to Ang's *Viva* advertisement, mailing in letters of varying length. Placing advertisements was the most effective method of gathering audience data at that time; however, technological change has meant that additional options were now available for our research. Because it is faster and more economical, and because it can reach many more potential participants than a magazine advertisement, we initially chose to use the Internet to make contact with potential viewers and invite them to share their experiences of watching *Dallas*. We decided to use a question similar to the one Ang placed in *Viva*, making some small changes so that it was simpler and directly addressed the reader in order to increase the number of responses: "We like the TV series *Dallas*, but often get odd reactions when we tell people. Would you like to tell us why you like or dislike the series? We will use the answers in our research project."

[2.2] Our question was posted on social media Web sites frequented by our friends as well as sites that were likely to be viewed by large numbers of individuals who had watched the series, a combination that we hoped would elicit a range of responses. Specifically, we posted the question on Fok.nl (<http://www.fok.nl/>, a general media site in Dutch); the Unihockey Club Face Off Facebook page (a Groningen University sports venue); the Web site of the University of Groningen American Studies Study Association; TV.com (<http://www.tv.com>); Reddit (<http://www.reddit.com/>); Forumer (<http://www.forumer.com>); and the Net5 Facebook page. Respondents could reply either publicly on the topic itself or send us personal messages, and we decided to personally contact all the respondents individually to ask them if they would elaborate on their previous response.

[2.3] Unfortunately, responses to our question were too limited to provide sufficient material for this research. Consequently, we decided to supplement this material with additional information from friends and family. We contacted members of our own personal networks by e-mail and solicited them to take part, using the same question.

[2.4] This meant that, unlike in Ang's study, many of our participants watched the series purely to take part in this research; also, some of the respondents did not watch the entire series. Also in contrast to Ang's research, our sample was more heterogeneous in terms of gender and age. The social media and forums we chose were used by both men and women. This was also the case with the family members and friends we approached: we asked men as well as women to watch the series. Ang used only the women's magazine *Viva* in her research, which resulted in only three reactions from men (1982, 14). Questions regarding respondent distortion will be addressed in the discussion section of this essay.

## 3. Results

[3.1] Ultimately, our sample consisted of 22 reactions, 8 from men and 14 from women. The age division of the respondents—11 under 40 years old and 11 over 40—is important to keep in mind, as it represents those who have not seen the original *Dallas* and those who have, respectively. Our justification for using a nonrepresentative sample is the same as Ang's (1982, 9). Because the responses only serve the purpose of exemplifying the insights of the researchers, misrepresentation is not an issue. It is clear to the researchers that no generalizations about larger populations can be made on the basis of this sample.

[3.2] The positions of the respondents toward *Dallas* are clear from each response: none of the responses was neutral. For our convenience, positive respondents are called enthusiasts and negative respondents skeptics. In order to respect the privacy of the respondents, only the parts of the responses that are relevant to our argument are included. Additionally, respondents are identified by a random set of initials.

## 4. Media landscape: Genre

[4.1] An analysis of the respondents' experiences of viewing *Dallas* is premised on the notion that viewing television is an overdetermined material practice. If television shows are cultural products, then reactions to them are reactions to cultural constructs. Accordingly, reactions are also structured by ideological systems of meaning and value. Therefore, in our research, we infer that the ideology of mass culture shapes the way our respondents articulate their experiences of viewing *Dallas*. In *Watching Dallas*, Ang relies on the same presupposition. She notes that because there is no experience outside of ideology, the aim of her work is to describe how the personal experience of watching *Dallas* depends on the ideology of mass culture (1982, 23). In order to be a useful update to Ang's work, our research needs to take a similar approach to the new *Dallas*.

[4.2] In order to answer our central questions—namely, what kind of meaning do the viewers of *Dallas* give to their experiences of the show? and how does that differ from 30 years ago?—we note three aspects of the new *Dallas*. First, changes in the media landscape have certainly changed the experiences of watching television over the last 30 years. Consequently, the new *Dallas* must be contextualized within the current media landscape. Second, we discuss how viewers experience melodrama in the contemporary television format. Finally, we analyze how memories of the old *Dallas* shape experiences of watching the new.

[4.3] The new *Dallas* has remained the same as the old in some ways, though it has transformed in others. Differences between the original show and its sequel have not gone unnoticed by the audience. Changes are the result of both content-related factors like exoticism and plot, and more practical issues such as new viewing options.

[4.4] Exoticism and glamour both play roles in the attractiveness of *Dallas* for some of our respondents. Exoticism here means a foreignness that was important to Dutch viewers of the old *Dallas*. Respondent AP wrote:

[4.5] 30 years ago, watching the show was really relaxing because it showed a completely different world than my own. There were fewer television programs than now. Glamour programs (like RTL-Boulevard, etc.) did not exist yet. The Netherlands was less Americanized and *Dallas* was a sort of dream world that, nonetheless, corresponded to an existing reality far from my own.

[4.6] BL similarly discusses elements of glamor in *Dallas*, mentioning "sports cars with shiny wheels," as well as physical appeal, when writing, "The prettiest girl swings between JR junior and Bobby Jr (is his name Christofer?)." AP, above, observes that she no longer has a need for glamor or dreamlike worlds; to BL, however, glamor adds to the appeal of the show and her viewing experience.

[4.7] These glamorous elements might also contribute to the common categorization of *Dallas* as a soap opera among respondents. From a production point of view, *Dallas* does not fit the standards for a soap opera. It should rather be classified as a prime-time drama. Both the original *Dallas* and its new incarnation aired weekly, rather than daily; they were not produced for daytime consumption. Even so, research participants compare *Dallas* to soap operas, noting its much higher production values, quality scripts, and aesthetic appeal. JB writes, "*Dallas* changed my main objection to soap operas, namely that

they're of low production quality." FF notes, "My recollection of soap operas is that they go on without end. For some reason this show has created the impression it will end at some point."

[4.8] It appears that the production values of the show alone are not what keep respondents interested in the show, as the quality of *Dallas*'s plotlines is frequently measured by entertainment value rather than artistic merit. BL remarks, "The incredibly bad plot is really relaxing to watch." Respondent AA writes,

[4.9] Enough things happen in the show to keep it interesting. The blend of old and new characters is reasonably entertaining, and everyone has enough sympathetic traits to still be likable. The changes in plot are as they should be in a soap opera. Over the top, but exciting all the same.

[4.10] Despite its prime-time slot, the characters and story lines in *Dallas* closely resemble those of soap operas—and that is exactly how people experience and judge the show. This could explain why fans of the soap genre are generally positive about *Dallas*. As both BL and AA mentioned, to those familiar with the genre, the soap opera standard of rapid plot development and frequent moments of high intensity add to the enjoyment of watching *Dallas*.

## 5. Media landscape: Programming

[5.1] Production values and content are not the only technical issues that influence viewer satisfaction. As mentioned above, the television landscape in The Netherlands has significantly changed between the first broadcast of the original *Dallas* on the TROS channel in 1981 and the airing of the new series of *Dallas* in 2012. A change in the number of networks has also caused a change in television programming; similar programs of the same genre are often aired at the same time. Respondents point out that programming has a significant effect on their *Dallas* experience, and consequently the popularity of the new series. WP said that *Dallas* faced hardly any competition when it originally aired—something that is very different today. AH comments, "Nowadays there is so much on television that programs really have to distinguish themselves from others. This series distinguishes itself only by the familiar name, not because of the content." RP notes something similar in her response: "In the past you watched it because there was nothing else on TV, now you don't watch it because there are too many other programs on."

[5.2] These responses show that in viewing the old series of *Dallas*, people were searching for entertainment. As one of the relatively few shows on television at the time, *Dallas* proved successful at providing said entertainment. Soap operas today face competition from many different genres, including complex and reality television. Viewers are forced to make choices in what they consume. This deliberate decision to actively spend time watching a show implies a certain amount of dedication. Shows have to earn continued viewing. DG states her reasoning for not watching *Dallas* any more: "First, because these series are a dime a dozen, and second because I just don't have time for it." This response also hints at an additional reason for the current *Dallas*'s underwhelming ratings: as a result of technological changes, viewers are no longer confined to static programming. Fewer people watch shows on television, choosing instead to watch via mobile devices or online (either by downloading or by streaming), which further strengthens the aforementioned active choice and investment factors (Stelter 2012). In The Netherlands, it is not uncommon to stream shows that were released in the United States but are not yet available internationally. New modes of programming within the media landscape may have added to the decreased interest among our respondents in a classic television show like *Dallas*. In this light, it is also worth mentioning that several respondents stopped watching the new series of *Dallas* after satisfying their initial curiosity about the new series, or when the show failed to live up to their expectations.

[5.3] The meaning of *Dallas* in relation to programming has certainly changed between the original and the new series. Today, *Dallas* finds some of its significance in the active dedication involved in watching the show. This is underlined by the choice viewers make when choosing *Dallas* over other shows—a less prevalent option 30 years ago. Additionally, *Dallas*'s meaning to its viewers is highlighted by the investment of time involved in watching the show on demand.

## 6. Melodrama and irony

[6.1] The contemporary television format also affects how viewers experience melodrama. While reading through our informants' comments, similarities in vocabulary immediately gave us food for thought. The words *tedious* and *plot twist* are repeated responses. These words have everything to do with the soap status of *Dallas*. The soap opera differs from the normal TV serial in its long life: a soap opera can go on virtually forever, whereas serials have, or at least give the impression of having, conclusive endings. Despite the questions we have raised regarding whether *Dallas* actually fits within the definition of a soap opera, it is evident that our respondents still associated the show (or the *Dallas* brand) with this genre. Respondents, both enthusiasts and skeptics, pick up on the soap status of *Dallas* by commenting on its open-endedness, mostly with the word *lengthy*:

[6.2] It was fairly tedious, but JR's amazingly cunning character, in contrast to a number of disgustingly virtuous characters, and the completely unrealistic storyline kept the series fun anyway. The program almost attained a Cult status. (VA)

[6.3] I didn't like the new episodes of *Dallas* because the pace is slow, the storyline is quite boring and overall it seems old-fashioned. It reminds me somewhat of *The Bold and the Beautiful*, in which very little happens in an episode and that makes it tedious. (HT)

[6.4] From these responses, it seems that there are two dominant positions toward the soap status of *Dallas* and its melodrama. Skeptics would typically use the characteristics of the soap opera in a formal way, where "tedious" and "plot twist" connote "tiring" and "boring." On the other hand, admirers use the same words to indicate an ironic reading of *Dallas*. Ang also noticed an ironic viewer position in her study of the original *Dallas*. According to Ang, the ironic viewer position transforms serious melodramatic narratives into comedies (1982, 29). Ang finds her explanation for the ironic position in Michel Foucault's "The Order of Discourse." Foucault (1981) argues that ironic discourse aims to make the object graspable. Through the ironic position, the subject places him- or herself in a superior position in relation to the object. Viewers reconcile the ideology of mass culture (that soap operas are of low quality, for example) with their experience of pleasure by finding enjoyment in those very elements that position the show in a lower cultural category (Ang 1985, 99).

[6.5] The ironic position seems to prevail among enthusiasts. This is a development that relates to the contemporary mode of viewing television. Because television has become so self-reflexive—perhaps even self-ridiculing—the audience has responded in a similar fashion by ridiculing the television shows from an ironic position. The audience presents *Dallas* as a guilty pleasure in an attempt to apologize for liking melodrama. Additionally, viewers even involve the serial's consciousness about its norms to articulate their ironic experience:

[6.6] Also the way Christoffer [*sic*] first marries the trickster, only to jump into a relationship with his ex (who keeps swinging between JR junior and Bobby junior), then makes up with the trickster and moves on again etc. etc. I really enjoy that. (BL)

[6.7] BL sees the show's norms as the basis for his pleasure in watching *Dallas*. Involvement with what we might call the habits of a serial is an aspect of the contemporary television viewer experience. Jason Mittell (2012–13) argues that contemporary television has pioneered new forms of engagement for the audience. The audience ironizing the norms of the serial is not just an apology for the low cultural status

of soaps but also a manifestation of engagement with recognizable paradigms. It is therefore not surprising that none of the respondents articulated an "immersed" experience of *Dallas*; the contemporary mode for viewing television serials is all about engagement with the norms that the serial itself is conscious of. An ironic experience seems to be the current reaction to dealing with melodramatic discourse.

## 7. Nostalgia

[7.1] We found that ironic viewership was accompanied by nostalgia. Many respondents compared the new *Dallas* to the old, particularly those who remembered the original series. For these respondents, expectations for the new *Dallas* were shaped primarily by memories of the original. These memories are often the main reason for watching the new version of *Dallas* in the first place:

[7.2] I used to love *Dallas*...I watched the new series once and some of the old actors were still in the cast, to my surprise. Fun, I thought. But it was a disappointment. The new series isn't any worse than the old one but I just wasn't into it anymore. (JO)

[7.3] When asked why *Dallas* belonged in the past, JO replied:

[7.4] The new *Dallas*'s plot is similar to the one in the old series. I'm not really interested in immersing myself in it again. There are better shows.

[7.5] VA notes that the old characters are the same, a point she liked, but that "the second generation is too young, too slick, and not cunning enough." Though she thinks the story line is no worse than before, she stopped watching the new *Dallas*. Other respondents gave similar reactions but made their nostalgic feelings explicit:

[7.6] I used to watch *Dallas* as a kid, and I was curious to see what they had made out of it. It was fun to see the old characters again...So nostalgia [*jeugdsentiment*, "childhood feelings"] is the main reason that I watch *Dallas*. (BL)

[7.7] Admittedly, nostalgia is the main reason that I started watching. We used to watch with the entire family and I wanted to know whether or not I would find the new series just as fun and exciting. And I do. The storylines are solid and the fact that a couple of old actors are still in the cast gives it something extra. Season 1 has concluded, and if there is a second season, I will definitely watch it. (Night\*)

[7.8] I only watched the 1st series, not the 2nd and, to be honest, I don't really feel like watching *another* series. To me, nothing is better than the original Sue-Ellen, Jr, Bobby etc. It was fun *then* but not anymore...*Dallas*, for me, is nostalgia, nothing more. (RP) ([note 1](#))

[7.9] In these cases, the reasons for watching the new *Dallas* are rooted in nostalgia. Most conclude that *Dallas* belongs in the past, and they regard the *Dallas* reboot as an attempt to reconstruct the past. It is entirely likely that *Dallas* has been idealized in their minds. The setting in which they watched the show is as much a part of their lived experiences as the actual episodes. Our respondents watched this show not merely in the past, but also in their younger years, perhaps even their childhoods. Watching *Dallas* with their families was thus a crucial part of the experience. Though none of the respondents said so explicitly, use of the words *nostalgia* and *childhood feelings* indicates that something else has changed as well: the environment in which they watch the series. For this group of viewers, then, memories from the past shape their experiences of watching *Dallas* in the present. The show is not evaluated as distinctly separate; it is juxtaposed against the previous version and the memories attached to watching those old *Dallas* episodes.

[7.10] These respondents noted that they enjoyed the fact that members of the old cast were still in the series. Of the main cast, three actors reprised roles from the original show: Larry Hagman as J.R. Ewing, Linda Gray as Sue-Ellen Ewing, and Patrick Duffy as Bobby Ewing. Though these reactions show elements of the nostalgia involved in viewing the new *Dallas*, the reconstruction is not deemed wholly successful. While some enjoy the new show, others think that the original characters worked better, or that the show belongs in the past. Their viewing experience is clarified by Svetlana Boym's description of reflective nostalgia. Boym notes that "the alluring object of nostalgia" is notoriously elusive (2007, 10). Not only is perfect recreation impossible, but any effort to reconstruct or recapture memories and experiences can result in displacement of our original memories.

[7.11] This process is clearly visible in the quotations of these respondents. They looked forward to the members of the original cast reprising their roles. However, when the new *Dallas* was presented, it was apparent that the show, and the characters, did not live up to their expectations. RP's reaction illustrates this. She notes, "Nothing is better than the original Sue-Ellen, JR, Bobby." One could argue, of course, that these characters are the original Sue-Ellen and Bobby. Yet in her experience, something has changed. Although the actors are the same and the parts they play are comparable to the previous version of *Dallas*, they are not experienced by longtime viewers in our sample group as the original characters. This can be labeled as a one of the "contradictions of modernity" that belong to "reflective nostalgia" (Boym 2007, 15).

[7.12] Ang's original research concluded that many viewers interpret *Dallas* ironically (1982, 28–29). This remains true today. Though sometimes complicated by nostalgic sentiments, respondents still enjoy the over-the-top plotlines and lack of credibility. Yet viewers of the modern *Dallas* shift between nostalgic and ironic viewing positions, even experiencing nostalgia for their memories of ironic viewing. This blend of irony and nostalgia is an aspect of reflective nostalgia, not of reconstructive nostalgia. In Boym's words, "Restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous" (2007, 15). However, as ironic nostalgia puts the emphasis on longing and distance, rather than the referent itself, many viewers report an inability to reconstruct the past. As Susan Stewart puts it, "The nostalgic is enamoured of distance, not of the referent itself" (1984, 145). This can lead to an abandonment of the show altogether as nostalgia alone, in some cases, fails to overcome the additional hurdles of the modern television landscape. Though nostalgia has led many respondents to the first few episodes of the new *Dallas*, failure to relive the original experience leads to disappointment with the old characters. That disappointment, the abundance of available programming, and the explicit investment of time required cause some viewers to give up on the show altogether.

## 8. Discussion

[8.1] Our research question was deliberately left open to the interpretation of our respondents. Although we intended to avoid motivating certain biases, it nevertheless resulted in confusion. Many respondents replied with single-line answers that made analysis almost impossible. Shorter answers made follow-up questions necessary. However, the first responses did reveal initial likes and dislikes of the show, as well as the aspects of the program that informants thought were important. Though perhaps they guided the subjects to a certain extent, the follow-up questions were tailored to the respondents' first replies, giving them chances to elaborate and clarify. The follow-up questions, however, revealed part of our motives and objectives, so the answers could be considered less pure. A more specific research question might have resulted in more detailed answers, which might have eliminated much of this distortion.

[8.2] The media we used to conduct our research in the beginning—that is, fan forums, general forums, and Facebook pages—might be the cause of the brief and nondescriptive answers. The way we asked the question signaled that we were not dedicated fans ourselves. The research question did mention that we liked *Dallas*, but it did not convey any particular enthusiasm on our part. The Internet community forums we used display the durations of memberships and the numbers of posts that users



have made. We, as researchers, were not part of the communities and could be identified as such by our question, membership lengths, and low post counts. This outsider status could have been a cause for the reluctance of community members to reply. Internet users are bombarded with questionnaires and surveys, and therefore we were often greeted with suspicion. Take, for example, the first posts on the Fok! forum: "Please elaborate the background of this research"; "Why is it a surprise that you get mixed reactions?"; "This is just a survey." Only after a more detailed explanation of the research was provided were users willing to respond. This elaboration could have shaped reactions, just like the follow-up questions.

[8.3] The Internet provides, however, various avenues of dialogue. It is unreasonable to expect that subjects would only communicate with the researchers. Participation in public discussion has become more important than it might have been in Ang's age, which might also explain the initial short replies. People realize, consciously or unconsciously, that the researchers can respond instantly and without effort. This means that joining the discussion is not required simply to establish a connection but also because the reactions of respondents are posted in order to create a dialogue. Dialogue, then, is not simply a distortion of this research but an essential part of all communication.

[8.4] It could also be suggested that the fact that a significant proportion of our research population watched the show only for the purposes of aiding our research significantly distorted our results. However, this does not appear to be applicable to our research. Though a potential worry could be that such participants would only give very negative views on the show, as they had not actively chosen to watch it themselves, many instead expressed pleasure at watching the new show. Another potential issue could be the audience lacking context for the new *Dallas*, in particular its relationship with its previous incarnation. However, this too did not prove problematic, as many of those participants who watched the show simply for this research had been viewers of the original version 30 years previously, so they placed the new series within this context. In short, any potential distortions were not evident in our results.

[8.5] In some cases, the population differences were even beneficial for our research, rather than having a negative effect. First, it is likely that our deliberate participant viewers watched the show more attentively than the casual viewers, and the consequences of this—depth and specificity of response—were vital to providing us with a sufficient quality and quantity of material to analyze. Furthermore, by accessing a broader population—those who had not chosen to watch the show as well as those who had—we had a much wider knowledge base open to us, much of which proved revealing in our analysis. It allowed us to understand some reasons why people may have decided not to watch the show—for a show whose audience is significantly smaller in its new incarnation, this is a particularly important research area—and how this relates to changes in the television landscape over the past 30 years, something we would not have been able to discover otherwise.

## 9. Conclusion

[9.1] Today, even more so than in the 1980s, *Dallas* faces serious competition from a vast array of other media options. Viewing *Dallas*, then, is an active, conscious choice, one shaped in no small part by that very multitude of entertainment options. Ironic readings may be less satisfying when there are competing shows on different channels, but they were still present in the responses we received from viewers. Additionally, many viewers reported nostalgic viewing positions. The blend of ironic reading and nostalgia seems to have resulted in the generation of a more ironic, reflective nostalgia, in contrast to the more serious restorative type of nostalgia. It would be interesting to study which kinds of nostalgia are displayed by different types of viewers. Our sample, however, was too small to do this. Though our viewers clearly reveal nostalgic viewing positions, their reactions are not detailed enough to allow further conclusions on this perspective. What is clear is that *Dallas* failed to permanently win back viewers on the basis of nostalgia. Though producers of the new *Dallas* attempt to invoke feelings of nostalgia to reattract previous fans, consumers ultimately determine their own interpretations.

[9.2] The responses demonstrate that viewers of the new *Dallas* still take ironic viewing positions, as with Ang's original research. The show is praised and criticized with the same words, such as *lengthy*, *tedious*, and *hideous*. One might expect the ironic position to be less prevalent in light of competition from other networks; those who do not like the show for what it is can simply switch channels. The reason for this is unclear. We cannot conclude that people generally like to watch shows from an ironic perspective. What is possible, however, is that the ironic position is a mode of watching television that was used in the past—when there were fewer alternatives—and has become a habit, even though one might argue that it is no longer required to adopt this position. What is clear is that this mode of watching has a significant influence on viewer experience. Consequently, conducting research with the intent of discovering exactly why people like the ironic position might be desirable.

[9.3] The accessibility made possible by the Internet makes the researcher's task both easier and more complicated. It creates many connections, but it also demands more input from the researcher. The open-ended question required a round of follow-ups to which some users did not respond. The issue remains whether other methodologies might activate more responses.

## 10. Acknowledgments

[10.1] Thanks to Marcel Zantingh for his contributions. Revised by Raquel L. Raj and Mabel Wale.

## 11. Note

1. Acute accents to stress *tóen* and *nóg* in the original are transcribed as italics.

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